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CONCERN

A Pamphlet Series
For Questions of Christian Renewal

No. 7

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And if any will plead that there is now no infallible judgment to be expected from the Spirit of God in the church, it, no doubt, will leave the dissenters as much in the mist, and at as great a loss, as those they dissent from; both being no better than blind men, hitting at random, which will turn Christianity into skepticism. And though we may acknowledge, that this uncertainty prevails in the generality of those called churches, yet we do firmly believe that the true church of Christ has a more solid, stable foundation; and being never separated from Christ, her head, walks in a more certain, steady, and unerring path.

Robert Barclay, A Treatise on Church Government, formerly called Anarchy of the Ranters.

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Lithographed in U.S.A.

that this function of the pastor is symbolic, and that it must point to a reality behind the symbol. If the reality of a loving, concerned fellowship of Christian believers is not present, the pastor is only the symbol of an illusion. How often pastors have heard this response from a counselee, "Yes, I know what you say is true, but I've never experienced it in this church." Regardless of how well trained, or how attractive and competent the pastor may be, he can never substitute for the actuality of a vital brotherhood which embraces each member, and by the quality of its life, is a compelling invitation for others to accept its Lord.

The background of Alan Paton's novel Cry the Beloved Country is the shattering of the solidarity of a South African community by the forces of industrialization. The story is of the confusion of an African minister whose only son is executed for having committed most of the crimes against society. The community exacts its terrible toll on the family. In one place the consternation of the people in South Africa is expressed in these words, "The counselors of the broken tribe having counsel for everything except the matter of a broken tribe." Wayne Oates comments on this, "Religious counselors tend to have counsel for everything except the matter of the shattered state of the relationships of religious people to each other."

The task of healing the broken community is not easy. A revival of reality in brotherhood is even more difficult. But is this not our central problem in the renewal of the church in our generation? The test of any emerging concept of the pastorate is how much it contributes to the solution of that problem.

CHURCHLESS CHRISTIANITY

Paul Peachey

I

One of the most remarkable movements in Christian history is the Mukyokai Shugi or "churchless Christianity" of Japan. Arising as a protest to the sectarian and institutional Christianity introduced to Japan by Western missionaries, this movement seeks to "carry Protestantism to its logical conclusion." Today, scarcely three decades after the death of its "founder," Mukyokai Shugi numbers ten to fifty thousand adherents and exerts an influence in Japan far beyond its own circles.

No less original was the spiritual progenitor of the movement, Kanzo Uchimura (1861-1930). For nearly half a century this great prophet of God pommeled Japan and the Christian church with the Word of God. Born at the moment when Japan finally opened her doors to the West, his soul became the battleground on which the encounter of East with West was fought out in miniature. Even more important than this, Uchimura telescoped nineteen centuries of Christian development into his own spiritual experience with astounding profundity. For if the Protestant Reformation meant the Germanization of Christianity after centuries of Latin tutelage, in Kanzo Uchimura the "Japanization" of the faith occurred in the lifetime of a single "first generation" Christian.

Twice Christianity has been introduced to Japan. On the first occasion Francis Xavier, the great sixteenth-century Jesuit missionary, planted the faith here. With great insight into the Japanese mind and culture, the dedicated successors to Xavier won half a million souls to Christ in less than half a century. Then the government, aroused to suspicion by various factors, crushed the movement in a persecution that ranks with the most ruthless in Christian history. For the next two and a half centuries Japan was closed to intercourse with the outside world.

The second influx of the faith came shortly after the middle of the nineteenth century when the doors of Japan were reopened--this time by a "Protestant" power, the United States. (This year, 1959, Japanese Protestants are celebrating their centennial.) When the first Protestant missionaries arrived, conversion was still a punishable crime and real liberty was decades in coming. Simultaneously Catholics were able to resume their work; and, astoundingly enough, remnants of the original Catholic communities came to the surface--after having existed underground without outside contact for more than two centuries.

But meanwhile the progress of the faith in Japan has been slow. The combined Catholic and Protestant faithful in Japan today number fewer than one per cent of the population. Why this should be so remains to this day a favorite topic among missionaries and Japanese Christians alike. Though no ultimate answer to this question has been given, several important factors can be noted. One of these is Japan's experience with foreign powers down through the centuries. Japan has always stood under the shadow of the superior power of China which put her on the defensive, both politically and psychologically. It was from the Chinese that Japan took over her higher religions and the arts of civilization, while yet always successfully maintaining her political independence. Japan thus combined an extraordinary capacity to assimilate foreign cultural influences with an equally extraordinary capacity to safeguard the integrity of her own genius.

A further factor was that Japanese folk society and folk religion were already overlaid and in part transformed by a higher civilization and a higher religion. Missionaries were thus confronted, not with the inadequacy of a "primitive" folk society with few resources of its own, but with a sophisticated culture in the light of which Westerners were even considered "barbarians." A final factor we might note is the catastrophe with which the first incursion of Western culture in the sixteenth century ended. The Japanese had ample reason to fear that the interest of Westerners was not altruistic, especially

during the century of Western empire building in the Orient.

And yet when Western gunboats hove into sight on their coasts, the Japanese were convinced in terror that they were technologically behind the times. Internal political upheaval combined with external pressure to open the gates of Japan to commerce with the West. True to her own genius, Japan cautiously appropriated the industrial revolution but resisted any encroachments upon her own "soul." As she sent her envoys abroad, these sought to break down the civilization of the West into its component strands and then to appropriate only those elements which would bring their own up to date without destroying its core. In this process Christianity was excluded as an unnecessary and even dangerous element.

Protestant missionaries, therefore, began their work under circumstances which were hardly auspicious. Even apart from the government attitude which was hostile enough, the first young converts were troubled psychologically with the feeling that somehow they were traitors of their own people. To accept a foreigner's religion in place of one's own value system is indeed always difficult. But where this event is bound up with suspicion of treason the obstacles become well nigh insurmountable. To accept the foreigner's faith inevitably entailed a kind of submission to a foreigner and to a foreign culture. For the missionary of necessity employed a cultural vehicle, namely his own, to convey the faith. Thus the missionary brought not only Christ but a visible tradition of organization, sacraments, and creeds.

Fortunately, however, the heroic youths who accepted the faith, often the sons of recently dispossessed warriors (samurai), turned on Christianity the same critical faculties that enabled the Japanese to be selective about Western civilization in the first place--they distinguished between Christ and Christianity or Christendom. That is, as the missionary message filtered through the Japanese soul, it was Jesus Christ whom the Japanese believers could espouse, while they rejected the cultural forms in which the faith had ex-

pressed itself in the West. It was in Kanzo Uchimura that this process came most sharply into focus: And today it is his living influence that towers, perhaps above that of all other Christians, in Japan.

This filtering of Christianity through the Japanese soul was to have a further result. Not only did these new believers find the Western cultural garb of the faith inappropriate for Japan--and unacceptable in any case as foreign to their own genius, but also beyond this they discovered the inner inconsistencies of Western Christianity. And as they began to "speak back" to their Western tutors from the independent position before Christ and in Christ which they thereby gained, the reaction of missionaries often disclosed these inconsistencies more fully than before. It was the divided state of Christendom that constituted a major stumbling block.

II

How should a non-Christian nation respond to the Christian Gospel when it is represented not only by the competing claims of Catholicism and Protestantism but by literally scores of sects? We must ask ourselves bluntly: Is it not scandalous that Japanese Christians should feel themselves as Anglican or Lutheran or Calvinist or Mennonite? How can they feel themselves as such unless these attitudes are artificially cultivated by proponents of these denominations? Is it not a reflection on missionary and national alike that converts and churches should become replicas of Western schisms? Is it reasonable to expect sufficient information and maturity of the young Japanese convert to compare the counter claims of the various denominations and thereby find the one which could truly lay claim to the truth even if such were to exist?

Or is the approach of Uchimura and his "followers" not after all, a sounder one to seek for "essential Christianity" or as a recent Mukyokai writer stated, "'the most essential element' of the Christian faith, without which there can be no Christianity and beside which all other elements can be treated

as secondary and nonessential"? That such an approach entails its own perils we must note presently, but before we hasten to note them, we must face the full force of the problem and of the Mukyokai reply to it.

We cannot here deal with Kanzo Uchimura biographically, but since he is the clearest expression of the Mukyokai genius, we must cite him as an example. Uchimura united with six other students who were baptized with him when he was seventeen years of age to form the Sapporo Independent Church. Receiving some sympathy from the missionary who baptized them, they were soon caught in a competition between Episcopalian and Methodist missionaries. In need of a meeting place, they made plans to erect a church. Their appeal for help to a Methodist missionary brought a loan of $400. To these young Christians this building operation was a step toward full spiritual autonomy. To the missionary making the loan, however, this gesture was viewed as an attempt to hold the group for Methodist affiliation. When the church was completed and the congregation happily declared its independence, the missionary wrote a letter demanding the money back. The young believers rose to the occasion and at great sacrifice were able to repay the debt in full within two years.

This experience proved to be of decisive significance not only for Uchimura personally but for the history of Christianity in Japan. Thoroughly alerted now to the evils of denominationalism and to the necessity of the financial independence of Japanese churches from foreign funds, he went to America soon afterward for a period of study--there to have his illusions about Christendom further shattered. In his spiritual autobiography How I Became a Christian he described his trip to America in terms as the following:

> "...My idea of the Christian America was lofty, religious, Puritanic. I dreamed of its templed hills and rocks that rang with hymns and praises. Hebraisms, I thought to be the prevailing speech of the American commonality, and cherub and cherubim, hallelujahs and

amens, the common language of its streets....As my previous acquaintance with the Caucasian race had been mostly with missionaries, the idea stuck close to my mind; and so all the people whom I met in the street appeared to me like so many ministers fraught with high Christian purpose, and I could not but imagine myself as walking among the congregation of the First-born. It was only gradually, very gradually, that I unlearnt this childish notion."

And the unlearning process was well nigh disastrous. Had he not met in President Julius Seelye of Amherst College an understanding Christian friend, it is doubtful that he would have salvaged his own faith through it. After relating various disappointments, Uchimura continues his account:

"Time fails me to speak of other unchristian features of Christendom. What about legalized lottery which can depend for its stability upon millions in gold and silver, right in face of simple morality clear even to the understanding of a child; of widespread gambling propensities, as witnessed in scenes of cockfights, horse races, and football matches; of pugilism, more inhuman than Spanish bullfights; of lynching, fitted more for Hottentots than for the people of a free republic; of rum traffic, whose magnitude can find no parallel in the trade of the whole world; of demagogism in politics; of denominational jealousies in religion; of capitalists' tyranny and laborers' insolence; of millionaires' fooleries; of men's hypocritical love toward their wives; etc., etc., etc.? Is this the civilization we were taught by missionaries to accept as an evidence of the superiority of Christian religion over other religions? ..."

It is therefore not surprising to find entries in his diary as these:

"Feb. 18. Much doubting; not a little troubled. My heart must be fixed on God. Men's opinions are various, but

God's truth must be one. Unless taught by God Himself, the true knowledge cannot be obtained."

And again, sensing the hollowness and mundane ends of much organized religion:

"...I came to my seminary upon an agreement that I should never be licensed....And the fear that I had entertained about the bestowal of this new privilege upon me grew as I observed its benefits talked about within the walls of my seminary. 'One thousand dollars with parsonage,' 'twenty-dollar sermon upon Chicago anarchy,' ...sounded very discordantly to my ears. That sermons have market values, as pork and tomatoes and pumpkins have, is not an Oriental idea at least."

"Theology is too big a theme to be comprehended by small men. When small minds find themselves too small for such a gigantic theme, they construct their own theologies fitting their own smallness, and throw anathemas at those who comprehend it better than they. O my soul, do not contract theology to fit thy smallness, but expand thyself to fit its largeness."

"I am seeking for a higher type of morality than 'must.' I am hungering after the morality that cometh from God's grace. But such a morality is denied not only by the majority of mankind, but very little seems to be believed in by the students and professors of theological seminaries. I do not hear anything new and different within these sacred walls than from those which I hear outside. Confucius and Buddha can teach me the largest part of what these theologies are presuming to teach the heathen."

All these experiences were the making of Kanzo Uchimura. Fortunately for him and for the church he was driven back to find an imperishable foundation in Christ alone:

"In forming any right estimate of Christendom, it is essential for us first of all to make a rigid distinction between Christianity pure and simple, and Christianity garnished and dogmatized by its professors. I believe no sane man of this generation dare speak ill of Christianity itself. After reading all the skeptic literature that had come to my hand, I came to the conclusion that Jesus of Nazareth remains untouched after all the furious attacks made upon those who are called by His name. If Christianity is what I now believe it to be, it is as firm and fixed as the Himalayas....Some indeed rush at what they imagine to be Christianity, which is in fact no Christianity, but superstructure over the same, built by some faithless believers who, thinking that the Rock by itself cannot stand all the wear and tear of time, shed it over with shrines, cathedrals, churches, doctrines, Thirty-Nine Articles, and other structures of combustible nature; and some fools of this world, knowing that such are combustible, set fire to them, and rejoice over their conflagration, and think that the Rock itself has also vanished in the flame. Behold, the Rock is there 'towering o'er the wrecks of time.'"

"Christianity is Christ and Christ is a living Person." Again: "Christianity is God's grace to be appropriated by man's faith. Grace and Faith almost exhaust Christianity." Yet another: "Christianity is essentially the religion of the cross. It is not the religion of Christ but the religion of Christ crucified...." "Christianity is not an institution, a church, or churches; neither is it creed, nor dogma, nor theology; neither is it a book, the Bible, nor even the words of Christ. Christianity is a Person, a living Person, Lord Jesus Christ, 'the same yesterday, today, and forever.' If Christianity is not this, the ever-present living He, it is nothing. I go directly to Him, not through churches and popes and bishops and other useful and useless officers. 'I in them and they in Me'--so says He of His disciples."

These are the words, not of a careful theologian who has worked out his ideas in a consistent system, but the outbursts of saint wrestling with God amid the realities of life. That there are deficiencies in his statements is not to be denied. But these dare not deter us from seeing his central burden which always comes out with great cogency. Christianity entails the believer's fellowship and walk with Christ and not an authoritative cultural deposit which is to be perpetuated and appropriated externally. If such a conclusion does not answer all the questions that intrude themselves, its authenticity and profundity are not to be gainsaid.

III

When Uchimura returned to Japan, he took an uncompromising stand as a Christian. His association with the Christian movement was constant and intimate, and yet he did not join a denominational group. He first coined the term Mukyokai, meaning "no church," in a pamphlet published in 1901. While the word "no church" or "churchless" has a negative connotation, it was meant as a positive affirmation of the church in the true sense and a negation only of institutional Christianity. "Mukyokai is a church without a church." Or as a later writer was to say, "Mukyokai Shugi is not a mere ism and the mu ... is not a mere negation; it is a greater or more positive affirmation of the church than that of the churches themselves." That is, since it claims to adhere to the church as "life union with God through Christ," Mukyokai stands for a fullness which does not obtain where other limiting principles as creed, sacrament, or office are set up. Another writer states:

> "Mukyokai is not anti-ecclesiastical, but it is working for the kingdom of God where neither Protestantism nor Mukyokai (non-church) exist, but where all are one through Jesus Christ and there is one real church which is His body."

Uchimura was opposed not only to institutional Christianity but also to the planting of Western institutions foreign to Japanese soil. That is, he sought both "essential Christianity" and "Japanese Christianity." Says a contemporary writer: "The churches are almost all importations including titles, organizations, methods, and teachings, which in many cases, have nothing to do with the interests and needs of the Japanese." To Uchimura, financial and institutional independence were indispensable to Christianity in Japan. Christianity was to become a "permanent power by the force of its own life."

History has proven the validity of Uchimura's insights. To this day Japanese Protestantism is unable to support the organizational superstructures with which the missionaries endowed it without foreign financial and even managerial help. This is accentuated by a duplication of services due to denominational divisions. (In this respect the Catholics are even more vulnerable, since even the majority of the clergy are still foreign, which is not the case among Protestants). For this reason Christianity still "smells too much like foreigners," as a student told the writer recently.

These views of Uchimura led to the development of a unique pattern of church life, first evolved by Uchimura himself and then taken up by many others after his death. Believers (and eventual seekers) meet for Bible study under a teacher in a home or rented hall. The meetings include Scripture reading, prayer, and often hymn singing (from the usual Protestant hymnbook); but there are no sacraments. Uchimura published a monthly magazine for a number of years which he entitled Bible Study. Devoted chiefly to exegetical studies and certain current topics, he wrote most of his own materials. For a time he had a group loosely organized around his magazine, only to loosen them still further when the impression got abroad that a church was in formation. To ensure that no permanent institution would outlive him, he discharged his assistant and in his will ordered his magazine discontinued after his death.

Bible study in Mukyokai is of a high caliber, since many of the teachers are men of high academic standing. Perhaps the most influential Mukyokai teacher at the present time retired a year ago from the presidency of Tokyo University, the nation's highest cathedral of learning. Another has supported himself for years as a private scholar, publishing a magazine, leading his weekly meeting, and publishing a commentary of the whole Bible in more than a dozen volumes--some of which have gone through as many as seventeen printings and are widely used by Protestant ministers throughout Japan.

Membership is merely a matter of oral arrangement with the teachers. No lists are kept and absolutely no committees or other organizations occur. The Bible class does not even become a social circle, since visiting before and after is not encouraged. Whatever mutual aid is given, and there is some, is handled by the teacher. A troublesome member of the class may be excluded by the teacher, but this hardly constitutes church discipline in a full sense. Indeed Mukyokai Shugi leaders seem quite Protestant or individualistic in their view that all distinctions between the saved and the unsaved must be left to God. Since membership is almost intangible, whatever discipline obtains is achieved through the individual conscience. But no pressures are exerted on persons to become members. Motivation and ethical response are therefore of a high order.

Perhaps the closest parallel to this pattern of church life to be found in the West is the Society of the Friends. Indeed Uchimura had some sustained contacts with Friends in Philadelphia. Yet there are important differences. On the one hand the mystic strain is less pronounced, and on the other hand the Bible plays a more central role. The substance of the Mukyokai gathering is the study of the Bible, which is the exclusive historical source of divine truth. Yet a foundamentalist view of inspiration is eschewed, and the textual scholars of this movement employ all the resources of critical scholarship. "The Bible is the expression of the

life and work of God, and since 'life' is greater than its expression, it cannot be expressed completely in any logical or theological form," says a contemporary Mukyokai writer. But likewise they reject a liberal view of the Scriptures. Concludes the same writer, " ... apart from both the written Word and the quickening Spirit there is no knowledge of the living Word of God."

It must also be stressed that "churchless Christianity" does not derive from mere quietism or an individualistic view of salvation. While individuals in the movement sometimes do give this kind of impression, certainly many of the leaders are strongly and even radically social in their outlook. Uchimura said at one point, "I learned from Christ and His apostles how to save my soul, but from the prophets, how to save my country." The ethical dimension is expressed in vigorous positions taken on social issues, particularly on the evils of national life such as idolatrous nationalism and militarism. Uchimura sacrificed his academic career by refusing a worshipful act toward an imperial rescript. Prior to and during the late Pacific War Mukyokai leaders were among the most heroic in resisting the demands of the militarists, suffering imprisonment and the suspension of their publications and meetings. In Uchimura, however, an important shift in social attitudes occurred in later life. Where early in his career he became linked to various reform efforts of the Socialists and others, he later abandoned this approach--concluding that only through individual change can social change be effected. But this change in attitude toward history was accompanied by a strong turn to eschatology as the framework of social fulfillment. Thus even then his view of salvation was not individual escapist.

IV

How is Mukyokai Shugi to be assessed, and what attitude should Christians in other movements take toward it? It will be noted first of all that the disavowal of creed and organization as well as the youth and the fluidity of the movement make

any assessment difficult. Accordingly out-group scholars have been extremely cautious in their assertions about Mukyokai Shugi, and in-group spokesmen do not give "official" answers. Nonetheless some questions do arise. Perhaps the first thing to stress is that in a very real sense Mukyokai stands in the stream of the "left wing" of the Reformation. Said Uchimura fairly early in his career,

> "The world needs another religious reformation. The 16th century ended as an arrested movement. Protestantism upon becoming an organization reverted to Catholicism. If we can carry Protestantism to its logical conclusion we will have another reformation. The new Protestantism if it is perfectly free cannot remain in churchism."

Seen from this perspective the evil of Catholicism consisted not in the single abuses which the Reformation eliminated, but in the very premises on which it rested--in the attempt to make "an institutional organization the center of the Ekklesia--of substituting human service or earthly authority for the activity and authority of the Spirit" in the midst of the believers. The church is seen by Uchimura as a spiritual reality, whose structure and therefore whose unity is found in the experience of the believers. It is the attempt to objectify or incorporate this unity in organizational, credal, or liturgical structures that leads to disunity. The denominational structure may embrace true Christians, but as such it is of human rather than divine origin.

In the light of this, the ecumenical movement seems, to Mukyokai thought, to rest on the same false premises as do the denominations in the first place, even though individual Mukyokai leaders manifest a friendly interest in the World Council of Churches. The ecumenical effort is misconceived since it tries to harmonize structures by further structural means, when the real problem is their existence in the first place. Difficulty arises immediately with the shift from the basic reality of "spiritual fellowship with God through

Christ" to the stipulating of external criteria, whether creed, sacrament, office, or other institutional means, as essential to the church. There is therefore in the Mukyokai a readiness to admit great variety in outward expression, depending on culture and circumstance. Uchimura was willing on rare occasions even to baptize, where circumstances seemed to require it. Rejection of the sacraments is not dogmatic. Basically, since the purpose of theology or dogma is to witness to the reality of the life in Christ rather than to measure faith, uniformity is not an issue. (The possibility of false teaching is nonetheless admitted.)

Perhaps none of the foregoing arguments can be gainsaid, either Scripturally or logically. And yet experience to date has shown that at least procedurally no new approach has been found. For in the perpetual struggle for the meaning of the church, every ecclesiology claims to limit itself to the essential, in a sense, to the minimal. Seen from the "outside," therefore, Mukyokai Shugi does what all others do. But since others cannot agree to their definition, they become simply another sect by force of circumstance. The Catholic approach, it must be noted, is the opposite. It seeks for "fullness," where Protestantism is imperfect or fragmentary. For Protestants to return to the "mother church" is not to surrender their own genius but to assimilate it into the fullness of the "Catholic Church." In any case is not the danger great that a movement which comes into existence as a protest and draws deep inspiration from a critique of existing traditions may indeed be deficient or incomplete? This is not to refute the Mukyokai argument or to accept the Catholic dogma (which is not our present subject), but rather to indicate the problems we face even if we accept the Mukyokai premises.

Another question to arise at the outset is whether churchlessness is not a form of institution in itself. A contemporary Mukyokai writer points out that Mukyokai Shugi "is not a denomination, it is a spirit, a character." Nevertheless, a recent scholarly survey of Mukyokai beliefs and attitudes seems to detech a second- or third-generation hardening of

beliefs--an interest in the precision and preservation of certain formulas rather than the creative openness and flexibility of the "founder." This leads us to ask whether the problem of denomination is exhausted in the question of ecclesiastical institutions, or whether it is not even more profoundly a spiritual or psychological problem. Shared experiences are subject to stereotype in the psychological domain, whether or not there are accompanying institutional structures. Once again this is not to reject the Mukyokai argument. There is a Biblical view of the church and there are unbiblical views, and Mukyokai Shugi has penetrated to the heart of the question. But even a right theology can be falsely held.

A second series of questions, however, is theological in nature. It must be asked, for example, whether a purely spiritual view of the church does justice to the concept of the New Testament in which "sacraments," gifts, and doctrine do play a role and which provides for visible assemblies of believers. Does not Mukyokai Shugi sacrifice something of the concrete reality of the church for the sake of its central valid emphasis? Is it right to say that Jesus did not indend to found the church?

A third series of questions is practical in nature. How does a purely spiritual church actualize herself in history? Does not every actualization define itself in outwardly concrete ways? Must it not be admitted that the regular gathering for Bible study is generically as truly institutional as is the high mass, though, to be sure the two are not to be equated? Or what of the concrete deeds of the Christian fellowship? A young Mukyokai adherent told this writer recently that he would like to take up Christian work of rehabilitation in southeast Asia, but there is no organ in his movement whereby he can do so.

One must ask, too, whether, if the shortcoming of Western Christendom derives at least in part from its Westernization, Mukyokai's insistence on being a Japanese "form" of the faith does not lead to the same error here? May Mukyokai

repeat in Japan the error of the Western church of identifying national culture with Christianity?

A fourth series of questions has to do with the relationship of Mukyokai to the denominations. Since Mukyokai arose as a corrective, may it therefore be incomplete in itself? One of the most trenchant criticisms of the denominations made by Mukyokai Shugi is that "each of them acts as if it were the only body of Christ." And yet Mukyokai groups carry on their own work without necessary reference to other Christians in the locality--and is not that the essence of the denominational sin?

It must be recognized, however, that communication between Mukyokai and the denominations is by definition extremely difficult. In communication between the "churches" denominational organ confronts denominational organ. But Mukyokai Shugi would destroy itself in the very act of creating an organ to serve as a conversational partner. It is understandable, therefore, that the "churches" should feel frustrated and even resentful in any dealing with Mukyokai. And by the same token Mukyokai attitudes are often less outgoing than they ought to be. Thus perhaps the most devastating feature of the denominational pattern of Christianity is that it makes virtually impossible the existence of churches in any form other than sectarian.

Having noted both the substance of Mukyokai Shugi and the criticisms to which it gives rise, what conclusions are possible? It has been the purpose of this essay to introduce Mukyokai Shugi to readers meeting it for the first time but who are familiar with the problems associated with it. Anything more than some tentative suggestions would require a much fuller study of Kanzo Uchimura and of the movement he inspired than is here possible.

In terms of growth it appears that Mukyokai Shugi in Japan far outstrips Protestantism otherwise, proportionately speaking. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether Mukyokai alone, or even together with existing churches, will meet the

immediate evangelistic needs of the nation. This means, then, the continued existence side by side of Mukyokai, the churches, and the missions. What of the Christian witness under these circumstances?

The missions may well feel that the basic task of evangelism and the sharing of the Christian heritage of the centuries justifies their continued presence. But at the same time, it is in Mukyokai Shugi that Christianity has really assumed the flesh and blood of Japan. If the missions and the churches are to continue and to prosper, will it not be necessary for them to accept the judgment of Mukyokai Shugi and to submit themselves to the resultant transformation? In turn, however, ought this not to open the door for Japanese Christianity to enter more fully into the heritage of the centuries, into the church catholic, lest it be swallowed eventually by the Japanese spirit? Only if the church is truly Japanese can it be truly catholic, and only if it is catholic can it be truly Japanese. However remote and impractical such a suggestion may seem, the Gospel itself is the source of this proposal, which postulates unity and holds that "with God all things are possible."

(Note on literature: I have not cited sources in the foregoing quotations. They are taken from: Kanzo Uchimura, How I Became a Christian, Tokyo, 1894; ibid., Japan and the Japanese, Tokyo, 1894; Kokichi Kurosaki, One Body in Christ, Kobe, Eternal Life Press, 1954; Raymond P. Jennings, Jesus, Japan, and Kanzo Uchimura, Tokyo, Kyo Bun Kwan, 1958; John F. Howes and Otis Cary, Japan's Modern Prophet: Uchimura Kanzo, Amherst College and Doshisha University Presses, to be published 1959; Howard Norman, An Interim Report on Nonchurch Christianity in Japan, from Kwansei Gakuin University, Annual Studies, Nishinomiya, Japan, 1958. Also consulted were numerous articles in various other works, as well as Mukyokai leaders and members. The foregoing is a personal interpretation of a highly tentative nature, since I cannot claim a full understanding of Mukyokai Shugi.)

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